



Pakistan-Afghanistan Cross Border Training and Information Exchange

Quarterly Programmatic Report April – June 2005

Under Leader Award No. GEG-A-00-01-00005-00

Submitted by Pact on behalf of Internews Network, Inc.

As indicated in the corresponding quarterly financial report, the total amount expensed under this sub-award to date is \$159,673. This figure accurately represents amounts reported to Pact for the period ending May 31, 2005.

I. Executive Summary

Training, research, reporting, and radio program production under the Pakistan-Afghanistan Information Exchange program is now in full flow.

During this quarter, two training workshops were held in the Information Exchange headquarters at Peshawar University—one in April and one in June. An equal number of participants from Pakistan and Afghanistan attended these workshops.

As a result of the training, the Information Exchange now has a network of reporters and researchers throughout the Pak-Afghan border areas. These reporters are regularly contributing to the weekly radio program produced in Kabul and Peshawar by the Pakistan-Afghanistan Information Exchange team.

The program, titled *Da Pulay Poray* (Cross-Border), covers a range of issues affecting the border regions, and is being broadcast regularly by independent radio stations on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border.

II. Background

Reform of the mass media is a key component of development in the Middle East. A strong civil society requires pluralistic media that provide free and open access to information on developments both internally and throughout the world. Although the Arab media have often been exploited to foment anti-Western sentiment, global communications technologies, particularly satellite television and the Internet, are encouraging a gradual liberalization of the media and thereby creating important opportunities for the democratization of Arab society.

This pilot project strengthens the capacity of the legal and media professionals who will be at the forefront of building and developing pluralistic and open local media in Algeria, Bahrain, Lebanon, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Activities are tailored to the specific needs of each country, and include the following:

- Media monitoring. The program monitors newspapers, magazines, and other media to document and evaluate the media environment in each country.
- Media law assessment. In each country the program evaluates and assesses the media law environment and provides recommendations for media law reform.
- Training in media law and advocacy. The program works with local NGOs to train lawyers, parliamentarians, human rights groups and other civil society organizations to act as advocates for media law reform. It also promotes networking with the global community of media law reform activists for ongoing learning and exchange.
- Training in journalism, business management, and internet skills for media professionals. Training in internationally accepted standards of journalism enhances news quality and promotes a dispassionate reporting style. Business management training makes local independent media more sustainable. Internet training improves access to information and facilitates networking.

The objectives of the project are as follows:

- To impart reporting skills to journalists in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- To facilitate the exchange of information, primarily via radio programming, both in the border regions and to the audience throughout Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- To increase the quality, accuracy and volume of information available to the public in the region, and to improve their ability to make educated local political and social decisions.

Internews has set up a training and production center in Peshawar in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province, and a small office attached to Internews' existing project in Kabul, where journalists can come together for seminars and workshops and program production. Internews is also working closely with radio stations and journalists in the cities and towns in the border regions. Information-based programs will be produced together with local radio stations with the support of Internews training, and small travel grants will allow local media to cover regionally important issues. Programs and information independently produced by local radio stations will be shared throughout the region, enabling local populations to receive information that is both locally and regionally relevant.

III. Key Results This Quarter

Program preparation and production

The production centers in Kabul and Peshawar are now fully up and running, and operating according to an established routine. Every week, reporters and researchers based throughout the border areas in Afghanistan and Pakistan contact their respective Information Exchange office. They suggest topics which they would like to research and report on. Their national offices provide editorial guidance for lines of questioning and for focused, clear, and relevant topics. Having completed consultation with national offices on their topic of research, they collect interview material. This material goes through at least three stages of production. Due to lack of lap-top computers in the field, the reporter/researcher does a rough edit on his/her mini-disk recorder, with further production being conducted in the national office and by the project director, who is the overall editor of the programs.

Eight programs produced

The hallmark of the eight *Da Pulay Poray* radio programs produced so far is emphasis on cooperation, harmony, and peaceful coexistence between people on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border, often at times when the mainstream media is concentrating on conflict and mistrust. *Da Pulay Poray* concentrates on issues which affect ordinary people, and see these issues from the point of view of ordinary people. On that grassroots level, harmony and peaceful co-existence does exist. By delving beneath the superficial and illusory issues which divide people, we are able to look at underlying social, domestic, and economic problems, and seek practical solutions for them.

Some of the topics dealt with in the eight programs produced so far have been:

- Interview with Nazia Iqbal, a female singer from the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan who has achieved enormous popularity in Afghanistan. Her message to the youth of Afghanistan? Honor your father and mother.

- How people are protecting themselves against mines in Bajaur, where mines are being used in some cases in personal disputes.
- Whether primary education should be made compulsory, for boys and girls, or whether it should remain voluntary, and be left to the personal discretion of parents.
- Will newly-established Agency Councils in the Pakistan tribal areas wield real power, and be able to make inroads on the all-powerful political authorities, or will they remain ineffective?
- How a national ban on gun-licenses has affected the legal arms business in an arms-making centre of the Pakistan tribal area.
- Girls marrying young: the psychological and health consequences of this trend, common on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border.
- Closure of refugee schools operating under the auspices of the Pakistan Commissionerate for Afghan refugees.
- The assistance which farmers in eastern Afghanistan require to find alternative crops and employment, instead of their opium crop.
- Pakistan tribal people are often blamed for kidnapping for ransom, but they themselves condemn this practice, and blame it on outlaws from the settled regions.
- Smuggling of precious stones from Khost, in south-eastern Afghanistan.
- Interview with a young girl who was married off to an old man, and the difficulties she encountered.
- The possibility of introduction of visa and passport travel between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and how this would affect travel between the two countries.
- The need for restoration work on the Fort of Bust, in south-western Afghanistan, one of the archeological treasures of Afghanistan that has now fallen into disrepair.
- The practice of giving girls away in marriage to end disputes, and the difficulties this leads to after marriage.
- How personal feuds in the border areas lead to needless loss of life, how these feuds are often caused by trivial matters, and how the feuds might be ended.
- How cross-border travellers wish for the agreement on a Pak-Afghan bus service, recently reached by Pakistani and Afghan leaders, to be implemented.
- How women are married off without being asked for their consent.
- How women are given away, to repay debts incurred against opium.
- How women are prevented from going to hospital, even when they have some acute complaint, due to the shame that family members feel on women going out in public.
- Burning of houses, and other punishments in the Pakistan tribal areas.

Cultural facet of *Da Pulay Poray* program

From the fifth program, the duration has been increased from 30 minutes to 45 minutes, to accommodate a weekly cultural feature. In this feature, we look at one cultural figure – his or her life and art. Usually this is a little-known figure, who has excelled in a certain cultural field, without achieving great fame. Thus far we have looked at one flute player/poet from the Pakistan side of the border, who plied his trade in Afghanistan; a traditional Pashto singer from the east of Afghanistan, who passed on his craft to four apprentices while living as a refugee in Peshawar, and a uneducated man from near Peshawar, who has memorized the entire collection of poetry of the Pashtoon bard Rahman Baba.

Afghanistan election feature in *Da Pulay Poray* programs

Another weekly feature to be incorporated into *Da Pulay Poray* has been a weekly report on the electoral process in Afghanistan, where parliamentary elections are due to be held in September 2005. Among the topics dealt with so far have been whether the elections should be party or non-party based; how refugees living in Pakistan will be able to vote in the parliamentary elections, whether Afghans would like religious figures or laymen to stand for election. Our Afghan team will meet the Joint Electoral Management Body in Afghanistan, to ascertain priorities, which can be reflected in the programmes.

Completion of two training seminars

Internews conducted two training seminars in April 2005 and June 2005 in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Peshawar University.

The first training seminar was held from April 19-27, 2005. The seminar mainly focused on enhancing reporting, production, and technical capacity of participants, to enable them to contribute to *Da Pulay Poray*. Generally, the training focused on journalistic and technical themes. Participants were introduced to the type of topics already covered in *Da Pulay Poray* programs. Furthermore, participants were encouraged to come up with new topics, both in the course of the workshop and after return to their own areas.

Altogether, twelve people participated in the training workshop – seven from Pakistan and five from Afghanistan. Of these 12, 10 have gone on to participate in the Pakistan-Afghanistan Information Exchange project in some capacity, six as recipients of travel, reporting and research grants, and four in project co-ordination and program presentation roles. The fact that such a large number of participants in the training workshop were able to go on to play a role in the project, is evidence of the success of the training, and the work that went into choosing high caliber participants.

The second training seminar was held on June 13-21, again in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of Peshawar University. There were thirteen participants, nine from Afghanistan and four from Pakistan. Great emphasis was laid on enabling participants to identify topics to be covered, to specify the particular focus and angle from which the topic will be dealt with, and to generate questions around the topic in question. Towards the end of the seminar, the trainers facilitated participants in choosing topics on which they wished to prepare reports.

The following topics were chosen:

- The practicality of introducing visa/passport restrictions on the Pak-Afghan border.
- Problems affecting tribes living on both sides of the Pak-Afghan border, such as the Mohmand, Ahmadzai and Shinwari tribes.
- How cricket has shifted from Pakistan to Afghanistan.
- Marriages between Pakistani and Afghan citizens play a role in making Pakistanis and Afghans close to each other.
- Pakistan and Afghanistan have agreed to start a bus service from Quetta to Kandahar and from Peshawar to Jalalabad. But so far this has not materialized.
- Dangers of scrap-metal business (old ordinances etc. brought from Afghanistan to Pakistan, some of which may contain unexploded bombs).

- Pak-Afghan Cross-Border Trade: various aspects of this trade were brainstormed, and the topic will be dealt with from various angles.
- Traditions and customs which Afghans have inherited from Pakistanis and vice versa.
- How Afghans have been influenced by Pakistani elections, and how they would like to improve on the Pakistani election process in their own elections, to be held later this year.
- How students from Pakistan and Afghanistan are able to gain admission in the educational institutions of each other's countries.
- Why hepatitis is so common in Pakistan's tribal areas.
- With the Afghan diaspora, how has the music of Afghan musicians been influenced by local musical trends in Peshawar.

At least half of these reports were of a standard that they could be carried on *Da Pulay Poray*. But what was even more striking was how the topics of these reports emphasized peaceful co-existence between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and rich cultural interaction between the two countries. This was not lost on the dignitaries – the Second Secretary of the Afghan Consulate in Peshawar and the Dean of Peshawar University – who attended the final session of the workshop. The mood at the session was very cheerful and genial – at a time of considerable political tension on an official level between Afghanistan and Pakistan – and everyone stressed the importance of cordial relations between the two countries, and the goodwill generated by the programs on display.

Research and travel stipends for journalists

The travel, research and reporting grants of the Pakistan-Afghanistan Information Exchange are directly related to contributions to the weekly *Da Pulay Poray* program. Journalists who have taken part in our training are commissioned to prepare in-depth reports on particular subjects of relevance to the border regions. These reports are then incorporated in *Da Pulay Poray* program.

During the quarter, 30 such grants were approved. Some have been paid, and some are still pending. These grants range from 500 rupees (US\$8.30) to 1600 rupees (US\$26.60) each, depending on the amount of travel conducted, the amount of time required for research and reporting, and the format of the program prepared.

The 30 grants awarded so far have been given to thirteen separate journalists, eight from Pakistan and five from Afghanistan. A complete record of research grants approved, with the names of journalist recipients, and the topics covered, is available upon request.

Involvement of women

Internews has paid particular attention to the involvement of women in production, researching and reporting, and project co-ordination, as well as coverage of women's issues. The results to date have exceeded all expectations, given the extremely conservative context. Every *Da Pulay Poray* program is now covering at least one or two women-specific issues, and this reporting is being done by female reporters trained by the cross-border project. In addition, a woman serves as project coordinator in Afghanistan.

IV. Comparison of Planned and Actual Accomplishments

Activities Planned for This Quarter	Timeline	Status
Brainstorming meeting for Pakistani tribal authorities, NGOs and journalists working in the tribal areas	May	Canceled (see below)
Involvement of women in production, researching and reporting, and in project co-ordination	April-June	Completed
Production of programs	April-June	Completed
Broadcasting of programs	June	Completed in Pakistan, delayed until July in Afghanistan
Holding of first and second training seminars	April-June	Completed
Granting of travel, research and reporting grants	April-June	Completed

Brainstorming meeting

The brainstorming meeting between Pakistani tribal authorities, NGOs and journalists working in the tribal areas was cancelled, after consultation with University of Peshawar authorities. It was felt after the first meeting, that such overt flagging of a “cross-border” project among Pakistani authorities raised more questions in their minds, than it answered in our minds. Unfortunately, the term “cross-border” has been used in the recent past in so many negative contexts – smuggling, terrorism, separatism – that it is difficult for some to comprehend it in the positive, peaceful and constructive context which the Pakistan-Afghanistan Information Exchange is presenting the concept of “cross-border” activities. With time, as the nature of Pakistan-Afghanistan Information and Training Exchange program becomes evident, we feel confident that the Pakistani authorities will also come round to the idea of positive, constructive “cross-border” activity.

Broadcasting of programs

Broadcasting of programs has been delayed in Afghanistan due to problems in the launching of a particular slot on the satellite feed to local radio stations.

The head of the Salam Watandar network has given an afternoon slot to *Da Pulay Poray*, which is to begin on July 20th. The program will go out three days a week, each 45-minute program split and packaged into three separate parts. Internews considers that a delay in broadcast in order to get a consistent time slot and broader distribution is more important than rushing broadcast via a more haphazard distribution mechanism, such as via courier to individual stations. All produced programs will be broadcast in Afghanistan.

V. Activities Planned for Next Quarter

Although originally scheduled to end July 2005, the program has been granted a no-cost extension through October 31, 2005. In addition, Internews has submitted a proposal for a cost extension of the project through March 31, 2006.

Training seminars

Two seminars will be held in July – at Nangrahar University in the east of Afghanistan and Kandahar University in the south of Afghanistan. A further workshop, in a location yet to be decided, will be held in the next quarter. The project will seek to conduct the training seminars in locations which are not yet covered by our network of contributors.

Extension of *Da Pulay Poray* coverage to Waziristan and Balochistan

Inevitably, the Pakistan-Afghanistan Information Exchange and Training program has expanded from its headquarters in Peshawar. The periphery of the cross-border region has to this point been covered by *Da Pulay Poray* reporters/researchers, and we will strive to correct this in the coming quarter. Of immediate importance are two very important border areas of Pakistan – Waziristan and Balochistan. These areas have been kept in mind for the next two training workshops – to be held in Jalalabad and Kandahar. The Pakistan project co-ordinator has visited Waziristan in the run-up to the Jalalabad workshop, and will go to Quetta in the run-up to the Kandahar workshop, to recruit promising talent from these regions, for participation in Information Exchange Training programs, and possible contribution to *Da Pulay Poray*. In the future, a training and production installation at Gomal University, in D.I.Khan close to Waziristan and Balochistan will also be designed to be a breeding ground for talent from these two areas, just as Peshawar has been for the more northern parts of the northern regions.

Linkages with universities, partnerships with fellow media NGOs

In the expansion of our activities over the next few months, the Information Exchange is in partnership with the media development company Sayara – another organization involved in media training, which is working, and has established facilities, in Afghan universities. We will be holding many of our seminars in such institutions. This also fits in with the University of Peshawar's policy of establishing linkages with other universities, especially those across the border in Afghanistan. It is also in the interests of the Information Exchange program itself, in that it has proved to generally be in universities where the raw and fresh talent is available, who can make a useful contribution to the in-depth and grassroots programming in which the Information Exchange specializes. While university journalism students provide a large proportion of those trained by the Information Exchange and Training project, there are a number also who come from established journalistic institutions, and also benefit from the training.

Extension of broadcast coverage

Our broadcast coverage in Afghanistan will be countrywide when the programs start going out on the Salam Watandar satellite network on July 20th. However, in Pakistan the coverage of independent radio stations is not so thorough, as no similar satellite distribution exists. Working through the independent radio network, there are bound to be gaps in coverage. Both government

and international channels will be kept in mind for augmentation of this coverage, from independent stations on the Pakistan side of the border.

Incorporation of madrassa (religious schools) feature in *Da Pulay Poray*

Since the Taliban time, the phenomenon of the religious school has been on everyone's minds. Government in Pakistan has taken measures to rein in, and modernize the syllabus of madrassas. A process of registration has also been initiated. How the madrassas work, and the need for modernization, is an important topic which will be looked at in a series of reports in *Da Pulay Poray* programs.